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Carlyles
Erster Faustaufsatz.

1821.

Braunschweig, 1896.
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Thomas Carlyles

Abhandlung über Goethes Faust

aus dem Jahre 1821.

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Thomas Carlyles

Abhandlung über Goethes Faust

aus dem Jahre 1821.

Ein Supplement zu den bisherigen Carlyle-Ausgaben.

Herausgegeben und mit einer Einleitung versehen

von

Dr. Richard Schröder

Bibliothekar an der Königl. Universitätsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Braunschweig.

George Westermann.

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Die vorliegende Abhandlung Carlyles über den Goetheschen Faust, welche in erster Linie für alle diejenigen, welche sich für Carlyles Entwickelungsgang interessieren, sodann aber auch für die Goethe-Forscher Wert besitzt, ist bisher den Gelehrten fast vollständig unzugänglich gewesen. Sie erschien zuerst ohne Angabe des Verfassers in der *'New' Edinburgh Review*[1] und ist trotz allen Drängens der Carlyle-Biographen[2] seitdem nicht wieder abgedruckt worden, obwohl diese Zeitschrift heute zu den gröfsten Seltenheiten gehört und z. B. in Deutschland, wie im Herbst vorigen Jahres durch Umfrage bei den Bibliotheken festgestellt wurde, in keinem einzigen Exemplare mehr vorhanden ist.

Die älteren Bibliographien[3] thun dieser Carlyleschen Abhandlung überhaupt keine Erwähnung, und auffallenderweise findet sich dieselbe auch in keiner der bisher erschienenen Ausgaben

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[1] *Edinburgh: Printed for Waugh and Innes, ... and G. and W. B. Whittaker, London* ... u. a. (Januar—April 1822.) Bd. II, S. 316—334.

[2] Vgl. E. Flügel, Thomas Carlyles religiöse und sittliche Entwickelung und Weltanschauung (Leipzig, F. W. Grunow, 1887) S. 29 f., und W. Streuli, Thomas Carlyle als Vermittler deutscher Litteratur und deutschen Geistes (Zürich, F. Schulthefs, 1895) S. 33.

[3] So u. a. C. G. Wenzel, Aus Weimars goldenen Tagen ... (Dresden, Arnold, 1859) S. 71, und F. Peter, Die Litteratur der Faustsage bis ... 1850. 2. ... Auflage (Leipzig, F. Voigt, 1851).

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der Werke Carlyles, selbst die sonst gute vierbändige Ausgabe der *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,*[1] welche die sämtlichen anderen selbständigen Goethe-Aufsätze bis zum Jahre 1832 enthält,[2] bringt dieselbe nicht, so daſs ein Neudruck dieses Artikels einem oft empfundenen Bedürfnisse abhelfen wird.

Die Wiederveröffentlichung dieser verschollenen Abhandlung sollte ursprünglich den Inhalt einer kleinen Festschrift zum hundertsten Geburtstage Carlyles bilden, den vor wenigen Monaten — am 4. Dezember 1895 — die Gelehrtenwelt Groſsbritanniens unter ungewöhnlich warmer Beteiligung aller gebildeten Bevölkerungsklassen feierte. Die gelehrten Körperschaften veranstalteten Gedenkfeiern, die groſsen Revuen führten ihren Lesern das Bild und die Thätigkeit des seltenen Mannes, des Weisen von Chelsea, wie sie ihn drüben gern nennen, vor die Augen, an dem einsamen Grabe auf dem Kirchhofe des weltentlegenen schottischen Dörfchens Ecclefecchan fand eine erhebende Feier statt, und das bescheidene Wohnhaus Carlyles in Cheyne Row ward zu dauerndem Gedächtnis des Toten in ein Carlyle-Museum umgewandelt.

Auch Deutschland hat an diesen Feiern herzlichen Anteil genommen, denn der Tote, den sie dort drüben ehrten, war einer der unserigen, nicht nach dem zufälligen Rechte, das die Geburt verleiht, sondern auf Grund der Verdienste, die er, der Schotte, sich in seinem langen Leben um deutsche Wissenschaft und Litteratur und um die Geltendmachung deutschen Geistes in England erworben hat, durch die warme Liebe endlich, mit

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[1] *Collected and republished by Thomas Carlyle,* Vol. I—IV (London, Chapman & Hall, 1857).

[2] In Bd. I: *Goethe's Helena* (entstanden 1828 und zuerst veröffentlicht in der *Foreign Review* Nr. 2). *Goethe* (1828, *Foreign Review* Nr. 3). In Bd. III: *Goethe's Portrait* (1832, *Fraser's Magazine* Nr. 26). *Death of Goethe* (1832, *New Monthly Magazine* Nr. 138). *Goethe's Works* (1832, *Foreign Quarterly Review* Nr. 19). Vgl. ferner Bd. I, S. 339 ff. und Bd. III, S. 303 ff., 316 ff., 324 ff.

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der er deutschem Wesen und deutscher Denkungsart zugethan war. Denn Carlyle hat für uns Deutsche nicht allein ein litterarisches Interesse, und der Kranz, den unser Kaiser vor wenigen Wochen auf das Grab dieses Feuergeistes niederlegen liefs, galt wohl nicht zum wenigsten dem Manne, dem wir neben seinem Werke über den grofsen Preufsenkönig unermefslichen Dank schulden für die Gesinnung, aus der heraus er am 18. November 1870 jenen denkwürdigen Brief an die *Times* schrieb, den ihm schon unser alter Kaiser Wilhelm mit dem Orden *Pour le mérite* lohnte.

Heinrich von Treitschke hat im Sommer vorigen Jahres in seiner in der Aula der Berliner Universität gehaltenen Erinnerungsrede 'Zum Gedächtnis des grofsen Krieges' in kurzer, aber durchaus treffender Weise das Verhältnis Carlyles zu unserem Volke und seine Verdienste um dasselbe charakterisiert. Diese Verdienste aber sind ihm in Deutschland unvergessen geblieben und beeinflussen in hohem Grade unser Urteil über den englischen Gelehrten. So würden wir Deutsche, trotzdem wir den glänzenden Vorzügen Carlyles als Schriftsteller unbedingte Anerkennung entgegenbringen, ja, trotzdem sogar der Zauber seiner transcendentalen Träume, der einst so viele ernste und denkende Geister seiner Nation umfing, auch auf unsere heutige Generation noch bis zu einem gewissen Grade zu wirken vermag, dennoch kaum Veranlassung genommen haben, uns so häufig und eingehend mit diesem Manne zu beschäftigen, als dies thatsächlich in den vergangenen Decennien geschehen ist; aber wir haben über dem, was Carlyle seinem Volke war, nicht das vergessen, was er, der Biograph Schillers, der Übersetzer und Erklärer Goethes, der Geschichtschreiber Friedrichs des Grofsen und der begeisterte Herold einer deutschen Hegemonie in Europa, dem unserigen gewesen ist: einer der genauesten Kenner deutschen Wesens und deutscher Eigenart, ein treuer und zuverlässiger Freund in der Stunde der Not zu einer Zeit, da wir

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deren nicht gerade viele im Auslande besafsen. Deshalb sind auch die Worte der Begeisterung, mit denen man jenseit des Kanals zu einer Huldigungsfeier für den verstorbenen Denker am Tage der hundertsten Wiederkehr seiner Geburt aufforderte, nicht an den Grenzen des vereinigten Königreiches verklungen, sondern haben in den Ländern deutscher Zunge ein lautes Echo geweckt. So brachte auch in Deutschland das vergangene Jahr einen ansehnlichen Zuwachs der ohnehin schon bedeutenden Carlyle-Litteratur: die erste Sammlung seiner socialpolitischen Schriften in einer guten deutschen Übersetzung und mit einer trefflichen Einführung,[1] ferner die gründliche Arbeit eines Schweizer Gelehrten[2] über Carlyles Stellung zur deutschen Litteratur, die in nahezu erschöpfender Vollständigkeit die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen der englischen und deutschen Litteratur während des 18. und des beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts bis zu Carlyles Auftreten aufdeckt, und endlich eine ganze Reihe mehr oder minder populärer Schriften und Aufsätze, welche Carlyles Wirken vom Standpunkte des Socialpolitikers, des Theologen,[3] Historikers oder Tagesschriftstellers beurteilen.

Besonders eingehend beschäftigt sich das Streulische Buch mit dem Verhältnisse des englischen Gelehrten zu Goethe; es verfolgt die ganze geistige Entwickelung Carlyles fast ausschliefslich unter diesem Gesichtspunkte, seinen Werdegang von dem ersten Goethe-Aufsatz an, den wir im Folgenden zum erstenmal einem gröfseren Publikum zugänglich machen, bis zu seinem

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[1] Socialpolitische Schriften von Thomas Carlyle. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt von E. Pfannkuche. Mit einer Einleitung und Anmerkungen herausgegeben von Dr. P. Hensel, ... Bd. 1. 2 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1895. 1896).

[2] Thomas Carlyle als Vermittler deutscher Litteratur und deutschen Geistes. Von Wilhelm Streuli (Zürich, Fr. Schulthefs, 1895).

[3] Hierher gehört als wichtigste die kleine Schrift von Christian Rogge: Thomas Carlyle. Ein Gedenkblatt zur 100. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1895).

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ersten Hauptwerke, dem *Sartor Resartus,* das er mit einem Goetheschen Motto beginnt, die ganze Zeit seines rührenden Briefwechsels mit Goethe bis zu dem Augenblicke, da er als 71jähriger Greis in der berühmten Edinburger Rektoratsrede, die wieder in einem Goetheschen Gedichte ausklingt, das Facit seines Lebens zieht und den Edelsten seiner Nation immer von neuem das Studium der Werke des groſsen Deutschen empfiehlt. 'Und kennst du keinen Propheten,' heiſst es in seinem *Sartor Resartus,* 'selbst in dem Gewande der Umgebung und dem Dialekte unseres Zeitalters? Keinen, dem sich das Göttliche durch alle die niedrigsten und höchsten Formen des Alltäglichen offenbart hat, und von dem es wieder prophetisch offenbaret worden; in dessen begeisterter Melodie selbst in diesen Lumpen sammelnden Tagen das menschliche Leben, und wäre es auch nur von ferne, wieder göttlich zu werden beginnt? Kennst du keinen solchen? Ich kenne ihn und nenne ihn — Goethe.'

Allein obwohl in dem Streulischen Buche mit besonderer Vorliebe alles berücksichtigt ist, was Carlyle zu Goethe hinzog und ihn zu einem Anhänger Goethescher Weltanschauung machte, so hat der Verfasser doch über dem, was diese beiden Geister verband, nicht versäumt, auch die tiefgehenden Gegensätze in Rechnung zu ziehen, die sie trennen. Übrigens hat auch Hensel,[1] meines Erachtens mit vollem Recht, darauf hingewiesen, daſs in der landläufigen Behauptung, Carlyle sei ein Anhänger Goethescher Weltanschauung gewesen, zwar viel Wahres, aber doch nicht die ganze Wahrheit liege. Und der vorliegende Faustaufsatz bestätigt dies in mehr als einer Beziehung und läſst an mehreren Stellen zwischen den Worten begeisterter Anerkennung die Selbständigkeit Carlylescher Denkungsweise unverkennbar durchblicken. Bemerkenswert in dieser Beziehung ist auch die

[1] A. a. O. S. XIX.

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Stellungnahme Carlyles zu der Faust-Manfred-Kontroverse, die den Schluſs des Aufsatzes bildet.

Carlyles Beschäftigung mit den Werken Goethes geht bis in das Jahr 1821 zurück, und die vorliegende, im Herbst dieses Jahres entstandene Abhandlung über den Goetheschen Faust ist somit die erste aus einer längeren Serie Carlylescher Studien, die sich ausschlieſslich mit Goethe beschäftigen. Obwohl dieselbe in der *New Edinburgh Review* ursprünglich anonym erschien, so kann doch Carlyles Autorschaft nicht angezweifelt werden, da er selbst in einem Briefe diesen Aufsatz als von ihm herrührend erwähnt. Am 12. Januar 1822 schreibt er an seinen Bruder Alexander in Mainhill:[1] ... *After returning [from Kirkcaldy], I set to on a criticism on Faust, which the Review people were wanting. They have now agreed to pass it till the next number, and I go on more leisurely. I shall send it whenever it is printed; though it will be very poor, being written on a subject which I have never expressed myself about before, and hence with no small difficulty. It will be far too good, however, for the place it is going to. The dogs have paid me nothing yet — nothing but smiles and fair words, which being hollow are worse than none.*

Neuerdings gab Flügel im Anhange seiner Carlyle-Biographie[2] kurze Citate aus dem Carlyleschen Aufsatze, und auch Streuli[3] verfehlte nicht, unter Anerkennung des Wertes dieser Erstlingsarbeit eine kurze Inhaltsangabe derselben zu geben.

Die äuſsere Veranlassung zu dieser Arbeit war der Wunsch Carlyles, einer für das Ansehen Goethes und speciell für eine gerechte Wertschätzung seines Faustdramas in England verhängnisvoll wirkenden Publikation energisch entgegenzutreten. Nach

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[1] *Early letters of Thomas Carlyle edited by Charles Eliot Norton*, Bd. II, 1821—1826 (London, Macmillan & Co., 1886), S. 25.

[2] A. a. O. S. 203—205.

[3] A. a. O. S. 33—35.

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den Zeichnungen von Moritz Retsch[1] hatte nämlich ein Engländer Namens Moses 26 Kupferstiche angefertigt und dieselben im Jahre 1820 nebst einem kurzen erläuternden Text herausgegeben,[2] welch letzterer indessen so bald vergriffen war, dafs die Firma Boosey & Sons in London sich bereits im folgenden Jahre veranlafst sah, dem englischen Publikum ein neues Textbuch zu dem gleichen Zwecke vorzulegen.[3] Es ist dies eine farblose englische Übertragung von Bruchstücken des ersten Teils der Tragödie in Blankversen, deren Zusammenhang und Verständnis durch einen kurzen verbindenden Text in Prosa angestrebt wird. Alle Stellen, und es sind deren sehr viele, welche mit den ästhetischen Anschauungen zartbesaiteter Engländer hätten in Konflikt kommen können, sind natürlich ohne weiteres unterdrückt. So sind z. B. gleich im Anfange Vorspiel und Prolog mit der kurzen Motivierung fortgelassen, dafs *both in conception and execution, they are repugnant to notions of propriety such as are entertained in this country.*

Gegen dies Machwerk beabsichtigte nun Carlyle mit seiner Abhandlung zu Felde zu ziehen, und er glaubte dies mit nicht mehr Aussicht auf Erfolg thun zu können, als dadurch, dafs er selbst seinen Landsleuten genaue Angaben über den Inhalt und Aufbau des Goetheschen Dramas gab; auch zieht er eine Parallele zwischen dem Goetheschen und dem älteren Marloweschen Faust, welche natürlicherweise zu gunsten des ersteren ausfällt; zum Schlusse glaubt er noch Byron energisch gegen den Vorwurf des Plagiats in Schutz nehmen zu müssen, den Goethe zu seinem, Carlyles, grofsen Bedauern in einem Augenblicke eifersüchtiger Anwandelungen dem englischen Dichter wegen des

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[1] Vgl. *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, Bd. 18 (London 1837), S. 63 ff.

[2] *Faust, an Analysis of Goethes Tragedy of Faust, in illustration of Retsch's series of outlines engraved by H. Moses* (London 1820).

[3] *Faustus: from the German of Goethe* (London, Boosey & Sons ... and Rodwell & Martin ..., 1821).

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Zusammenhanges zwischen dessen Manfred und seinem Faust gemacht hatte.

Zu einer eigenen Übersetzung des Goetheschen Faust, die Carlyle mehrfach plante, ist er leider nie gekommen, doch zeugen die späteren Abhandlungen über denselben Gegenstand, wie sehr ihn der Faust auch in den folgenden Jahren noch beschäftigte. Vielleicht ist in diesen neueren Arbeiten Carlyles ganze Auffassung eine reifere, seine kritische Methode eine schärfere — man kann auch darüber verschiedener Meinung sein —, für seinen Entwickelungsgang ist die Kenntnis dieser ersten Arbeit über Goethe indessen in keinem Falle zu entbehren.

Text.

Aus: *The New Edinburgh Review. January — April 1822.* ... [Motto.] Bd. II. *Edinburgh: Printed for Waugh and Innes, ... and G. and W. B. Whittaker, London* ... u. a. [s. a.]. Art. II, S. 316—334.

Art. II. — *Faustus: from the German of Goethe.* London, Boosey and Sons, 1821. 8vo. 86 S.

The title-page of this work excites expectations which the work itself is very little calculated to fulfil. It is no translation of Faust; but merely a pretty full description of its various scenes, interspersed at frequent intervals with extracts of considerable length, rendered into clear and very feeble blank verse, — generally without great violence to the meaning of the original, or any attempt to imitate the matchless beauties of its diction; — the whole intended mainly to accompany a series of plates illustrative of Faust, which have lately been engraved by Mr. Moses from the drawings of Retsch, a German artist. 'The slight analysis, drawn up as an accompaniment to Retsch's Outlines, being out of print, the publishers felt desirous to supply its place with a more careful abstract of Faust, which, while it served as a book of reference and explanation for the use of the purchasers of the plates, might also possess some claims to interest the general reader. With this view, ...' &c.

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We entertain no prejudice whatever against this 'more careful abstract'. It seems to be a solid inoffensive undertaking, founded on the immutable principles of profit and loss, and is accomplished quite as well as could have been expected. But we have felt mortified at seeing the bright aërial creations of Goethe metamorphosed into such a stagnant, vapid *caput mortuum:* and we cannot forbear to caution our readers against forming any judgement of that great foreigner from his present representative; or imagining that 'Faustus' affords even the faintest idea of the celebrated drama, the name of which it bears. An avowedly prose translation of the passages selected, would have been less unjust to all parties. It would have enabled the author to express the sense of his original with equal graceful-[*S. 317*]ness, and far more precision, without inviting such of his readers as know the genuine Faust to institute comparisons so distressing, — or leading such of them as do not know it to form so erroneous an estimate of its merits. According to this plan, it seems impossible that any stanza like the following —

Bin ich der Flüchtling nicht? der Unbehauste?
Der Unmensch ohne Zweck und Ruh?
Der wie ein Wassersturz von Fels zu Felsen brauste,
Begierig wuthend [*so!*] *nach dem Abgrund zu**

could have been transformed so miserably as into

— Oh! am I not
The fugitive — the houseless wanderer —
The wild barbarian without an *object*?
Or like a cataract that from rock to rock
With eager fury leaps *heralding ruin*!

* This simile is fast degenerating into what Voltaire called *un Suisse,* — a simile ready to move at any one's bidding. We have met with it repeatedly of late, both in poetry and prose, — in Manfred, Anastasius, The Apostate, — not to speak of others. Byron and Hope spin it into a fine allegory, each in his own fashion: Mr. Sheil, by introducing *frost* into his cataract, has contrived to illustrate very forcibly some doctrines of Martinus Scriblerus on the Art of Sinking. *Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas.*

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Poetical license, and the trammels of verse, are all that can be pleaded in extenuation of this and a thousand such unhappy failures. There are others for which an humbler plea must serve. *'Hör' auf mit deinem Gram zu spielen,'* the author knows full well, cannot mean, 'Oh! learn to dally with your misery': nor, on reconsidering the matter, will he fail to discover that *'alle sechs Tagewerk'* signifies the universe, not 'a whole week's business'; or that —

Und dann die hohe Intuition —
Ich darf niht [so!] sagen wie — zu schliefsen —

cannot be translated by

— And then the high
The wond'rous intuition? — I dare not
Proceed.

If such inaccuracies as these had been avoided; if the book had borne a humbler title, and been sober prose in shape, as it is in substance, — though it could not have interested, it would not have offended 'the general reader'; and purchasers of Retsch's Outlines would have taken it with them not the less, — which is nearly all the circulation it has any right or chance ever to obtain under any form.

Perhaps we are too severe on this slender performance: but the sight of it renewed our wish to see Faust in an English dress; while the perusal of it mocked all such anticipations. A suitable version of Faust would be a rich addition to our literature; but the difficulties which stand in the way of such an un-[*S. 318*]dertaking amount to almost an absolute veto. The merits of a good translation, especially in poetry, always bear some kindred, though humble, relation to those of the original; and in the case before us, that relation approaches more nearly to equality than in any other that we know of. To exhibit in a different tongue any tolerable copy of the external graces of this drama, — the marvellous felicity of its language, and the ever-varying, ever-expressive rhythm of its verse, would demand the exercise of all that is rarest and most valuable

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in a poet's art; while the requisite familiarity with such thoughts and feelings as it embodies, could not exist but in conjunction with nearly all that is rarest and most valuable in a poet's genius. A person so qualified is much more likely to write tragedies of his own, than to translate those of others: and thus Faust, we are afraid, must ever continue in many respects a sealed book to the mere English reader.

Certainly, it is not with the hope of doing much to open it, that *we* have taken up the subject. But if we can succeed in describing — though we cannot pretend to exhibit — any of the characteristic features of a work so generally famous, our efforts will not perhaps prove unacceptable to many who know it only by name: and for ourselves, Faust is so great a favourite with us, that a few hours can scarcely be spent more agreeably than in lingering amid the endless labyrinths of thought, to which a fresh perusal of it never fails to introduce us.

Goethe is likely to figure in after ages, as one of the most remarkable characters of his time; and posterity will derive from this tragedy their most lively impressions, both of his peculiar excellencies and defects. Faust was conceived while its author was passing from youth to settled manhood, — a period of inquietude in every life, — frequently, as in his case, of a darkness and despondency but too well suited to furnish ideas for such a work. It was executed when long culture and varied experience had ripened his powers; and under a splendour of reputation, which admitted the most confident, even careless exertion of them: its object is to delineate whatever is wildest and most mysterious in the heart and the intellect of man; and its chief materials are drawn from the heart and the intellect of the writer. In perusing it, accordingly, we seem to behold the troubled chaos of his own early woes, and doubts, and wanderings, — illuminated in part, and reduced to form, by succeeding speculations of a calmer nature, — and pourtrayed by a finished master, in all its original vividness, without its original dis-

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order. In studying the scenes of Faust, we incessantly discover marks of that singular union of enthusiasm with derision; of volatility [*S. 319*] with strength and fervour; of impetuous passion, now breaking out in fiery indignation, now in melting tenderness, now in withering sarcasm, with an overflowing gaiety, not only sportive and full of the richest humour, but grotesque to the very borders of absurdity, or beyond them, — which appears to belong exclusively to Goethe. In Faust too, we trace the subtle and restless understanding, which, at one period or another of its history, has penetrated into almost every subject of human thought; the sparkling fancy, and, as a necessary consequence, the boundless command of language and allusion — to clothe and illustrate, as if by enchantment, all the conceptions of a most capricious, though lofty and powerful imagination.

Qualities so exquisite have long placed Goethe at the head of German poets; and given him a kind of literary autocracy in his own country, to which nothing with us bears any resemblance. Unlimited power is said to injure the possessor of it; and here, as in more important instances, it has produced its natural effect. Goethe has suffered, as well as profited, by the want of criticism; and traces of his having written for a much too indulgent public, are visible in Faust no less than traces of his wonderfull genius. There is a want of unity in the general plan of the work, and there are numerous sins against taste in the execution of it. We do not allude to any of the three superannuated *unities* of Aristotle, or the French school: but there is not in Faust that unity of interest, which we are taught to expect in every work of fiction. The end has too slight a connection with the beginning, the parts with each other: and the general effect is more than once entirely suspended by the insertion of certain incoherent scenes, which it would not be easy to admire anywhere; and nowhere — it might seem at first view — more difficult than here. They resemble the *disjecta membra* of wit and satire, much more than wit and satire themselves; and though not without

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some gleams of meaning independently of the local and ephemeral topics to which they refer, they are given out in so raw a state of preparation as would undoubtedly expose them to very brief and harsh treatment from any critic but a German one. It were unfair, however, to deny that this strange mixture of pathos, and horror, and drollery, acquires, on reflection, a secondary beauty, sufficient to cancel much of its original rudeness and apparent incongruity. Faust is not constructed on the common dramatic principles, or at all adapted for theatrical representation. It seems to aim at holding up not only a picture of the fortunes and feelings of a single character, or group of characters; but at the same time, a vague emblem of the great vortex of human life; and in this point of view, its heterogeneous [*S. 320*] composition and abrupt variations, even its occasional extravagance, have a subordinate propriety, as significant of the vast, and confused, and ever-changing object, which the whole in some degree is meant to shadow forth.

The 'Tragical History of Doctor Faustus', by Marlow, is grounded on the same tradition with this play of Goethe's; but the two pieces have little else in common. The genius of Marlow was of a kind very dissimilar and very inferior to that of Goethe; and the structure and plan of his 'Tragical History' point to an age, with many of whose feelings and opinions we are fast losing all sympathy. Marlow's play derives its chief interest from delineating the gloomy and mysterious connection of man with the world of spirits: and presupposes a certain degree of belief in magic and apparitions. He has, in fact, done little more than cast into a dramatic form the story of the 'Devil and Doctor Faustus', which used so powerfully to harrow up the soul in the childhood of our grandfathers, and which still produces a pleasing, though far milder effect, on the more sceptical urchins of the present age. The characters are not more happily imagined, than the incidents which are intended to display them. His demon is a paltering rueful craven, whom we feel much readier to pity and despise, than to hate or fear. Faustus

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himself has few qualities to interest us. He is animated indeed by a boundless thirst for power and pleasure; but it is power and pleasure of the lowest sort that he covets. His anticipated delights are corporeal; and he longs for the pomp and circumstance of authority, — scarcely at all for the bold energies which serve to earn it, and, as exercising which, it is alone, or chiefly valuable, to a high mind. He hopes that

> As Indian Moors obey their Spanish lords,
> So shall the spirits of every element
> Be always serviceable to us three:
> Like lions shall they guard us when we please,
> Like Almain Ritters with their horsemen's staves,
> Or Lapland giants trotting by our sides.
> Sometimes like women or unwedded maids,
> Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
> Than have the white breasts of the Queen of love.

It is less the uncertainty of human knowledge, than the limited emoluments of a Wittenberg Professorship, that disgusts him; and he concludes a mad bargain with the devil, bartering his everlasting happiness against four and twenty years of sensual enjoyment, and of vulgar power; which he uses in a way worthy of the bargain, — in playing conjuror's tricks to irritate the Pope or amuse the Emperor, in cheating jockies, and eating loads of hay; and when the hour is come, he falls prostrate before his fate, with a frantic terror analogous to the brutal inso-[*S. 321*]lence with which he had spent the days of his prosperity. Marlow's work is not without some touches of the sublime, and many passages of a luxurious beauty; but it never could affect the reader deeply, as a whole, and its power of so affecting him is lessening daily.

Goethe's conception, both of Faust and Mephistophiles, bears not only far more relation to the habits of a refined and intellectual age, but is also far more ingenious and poetical in itself. The introduction of magic is but accessory to the main result: it is intended merely to serve as the means of illustrating certain feelings, and un-

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folding certain propensities, which exist in the mind, independently of magic; and the belief we are required to give it is of the most loose and transient nature. Indeed, if we can only conceive that an assemblage like his *dramatis personæ,* so discordant, and so strangely related to each other, has been formed by any means, the author appears to care little whether we believe in it at all; and throughout the play, glimmering indications frequently become visible of the ridicule with which the characters themselves, whatever they profess in public, inwardly regard the whole subject of *diablerie* in all its branches. Nor does Faust's misery, at any period of his history, spring from so common a source as the dread of his future doom; 'this sun shines on all his sorrows,' and it would hardly alleviate them perceptibly, if the hereafter were to be for him an everlasting blank. Mephistophiles, too, is a much more curious personage than formerly. 'The progress of improvement,' as he himself observes, 'has been so considerable of late, that is has extended even to the devil — the northern phantom with horns, and tail, and claws, being no longer visible upon earth.' He is a moral, not a physical devil; and the attributes of his character harmonize with the rest of the intellectual machinery by which Goethe undertakes to work upon our feelings. It is machinery of a much finer and more complex sort than that employed by Marlow; the management of it is infinitely more difficult; but the effect which he makes it produce is also much more ennobling, and reaches much farther into the mysteries of our nature.

Faust is first presented to our notice, seated at his desk, in a narrow Gothic chamber, dimly illuminated by his solitary lamp. Surrounded with all the materials of study, he is meditating on the vanity and utter worthlessness of all they can lead him to. In early life, he has entered upon the search of truth with the fearlessness natural to his ardent temper, solicited by such an object; spurning those consecrated barriers which, though they tend to repress the freedom of thought, often serve also to con-[*S. 322*]centrate its exer-

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tions, and thereby increase its results — he has attempted to penetrate the most secret recesses of physical and mental nature: he has now examined all, and nowhere found one satisfactory conclusion. From each keener effort to devine the essence of things, his mind has returned back more faint and full of doubt: and when philosophy, in all its departments is explored to the utmost limits of human research, Faust finds himself as ignorant as at the outset. Words will not satisfy him, and of real existences he cannot gain the knowledge. There are no first indubitable principles to guide him; and still the universe, study it as he may, appears before him a dark entangled riddle, the meaning of which, if it have any, is impenetrably hid from men. Nor is it to *know* only that he strives; the sensibilities of his heart have been embarked in this undertaking as well as the faculties of his intellect — he would *feel* as well as understand; and he cherishes vague and vehement longings for some unspeakable communion with the great powers of nature, whose magnificence expands his soul, while their mysteriousness confounds and repels it.

Faust's natural and acquired endowments are high, but his ideas of excellence are vastly higher. All that he *can* appears as nothing in comparison of what he *should*; and this enormous disproportion between what he is, and what he aims with such intense volition to become, forms a never-failing source of agitation to his mind. He has gifts which would bear him forward triumphantly to the acquisition of every thing that man is permitted to acquire; but all will not satisfy, if he cannot overstep the limits with which nature itself has circumscribed him.

Meanwhile, those secluded struggles, in which the flower of his days is already spent, have estranged him from the cheerful ways of men. Immured in his closet, among books and instruments, and all the dead machinery of art, he has long ago forsaken the sunny fields of life; friendship, and love, and worldly preferment, have alike been sacrificed at the shrine of science; and science has requited

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him with vain delusions and baseless chimeras. The spirit which longed to mingle with the cherubim, and explore the darkest arcana of the universe, is shut up within narrow cell of a college, and reduced to conduct a few boys through the juggling sophistry of scholastic learning. Nor does the magic, to which, in the bitterness of his disgust, he has devoted himself, avail him any thing. The beings whom he summons from the vasty deep, refuse to admit him to their fellowship. He shudders and sinks when the 'flaming countenance' of the spirit of the earth is turned towards him, and finds [*S. 323*] himself too justly reproved for vain glory in imagining that his nature could be raised to a level with it.

Cheated of this forlorn hope, Faust abandons himself to utter despair — he has no longer an object upon earth, and still no rest. The sources of feeling are changed into sources of self-torment; the acuteness of his sensibility, and the force of his will, serve only to augment his sufferings; his superhuman attainments lift him above human sympathy; he envies the sluggish happiness of those around him, still more than he despises the materials of it. His heart is stung to madness, when he thinks of what he is, and what he wished to be — 'an equal of the gods?' exclaims he, 'I am an equal of the worm, which crawls through the dust; which, as it lives and feeds upon the dust, the traveller's step annihilates and buries.'

In this tumultuous agony, his eye lights on a phial of poison, and one lurid ray of joy breaks in upon him, as he determines on self-murder. There is a stern pathos, a wild grandeur in the feelings with which he surveys *this* undisputed proof of human knowledge, this essence of all kind sleepy juices, by which the pangs of humanity are to be quieted at once and for ever. The lofty hopes of another world dawn upon him, where the soul's ethereal essence shall no more be clogged and cramped by its bodily fetters — where its lordly feelings shall no more be blighted and confounded in the low turmoil of earth. The stream of life is carrying him nearer and

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nearer to the great ocean; the mirror-wave is glancing at his feet; new day beckons him to brighter shores. He knows the fearful risk, but there is no alternative; he must boldly turn his face away from this terrestrial sun, and venture through that pass 'around whose narrow mouth all hell is flaming', whithersoever it may lead. The cup into which he has now poured the poison, recalls to memory his father's house, and the festive nights in which a *different* use was made of this old relic. One last paroxysm of awakened sympathies! — but he dashes them away, and the cup is at his lips. At this instant, the choir assembled in the neighbouring church to celebrate the Easter Festival, commence their hymn in worship of our Saviour. Its simple tones, and the solemn warning which the words address to mortals, toiling in this vale of tears, arrest the hand of the suicide; the remembrance of many happy days of pious childhood breaks through that of the agitated and unhallowed scenes which have succeeded; his seared and tortured heart is melted into natural feeling; 'tears flow; the earth has back her son.'

But Faust's miseries are suspended only for a time. Next [*S. 324*] day we find him in company with his amanuensis, Wagner — a quiet gerund-grinder, a collator of manuscripts and speculator on classical affairs, 'the poorest of all the sons of earth,' — whose phlegmatic character and dull pursuits are strongly contrasted with the fervid temperament and unearthly longings of his master. They wander about the fields, now covered with lively groups of the city population, high and low, come out to enjoy the holiday, and make merry according to their respective inclinations. Faust rejoices to find himself 'a man among men'; but as evening approaches he falls into his usual reveries; pours out his eloquent impassioned aspirations over the setting sun; and returns home to solitude and gloom as before. The world again appears to him a mournful prison-house, in which a thousand cares are let loose to prey upon the heart, and mock all its higher purposes. He knows not whither to turn for comfort or instruction. The New Testament occurs to him,

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and he eagerly determines to translate it into his native language, and study it more attentively than ever. But a difficulty stops his progress at the very threshold. 'In the beginning was the word,' is a statement which he cannot comprehend, and no alteration he can make on the passage will render it intelligible to him.

In the midst of this perplexity, an evil spirit, Mephistophiles, appears to Faust, and counsels him to lay aside all such vain speculations, to go forth into the world, and enjoy those real pleasures with which its votaries are rewarded. With cold malice, he leads Faust's imagination to contemplate the hopeless barren disquietudes of his actual condition. Faust admits that he has no hope; that, day or night, his anguish never ceases; that existence is a burden to him; and death his only hope. 'And yet,' rejoins the demon, with a spiteful apathy worthy of him, 'a certain man one night did *not* drink out a certain liquor!' Faust's heart is cut by the remembrance of all that he has suffered, and the anticipation of all that he has yet to suffer, — he breaks forth into a bitter and indignant malediction upon life and every thing connected with it.

Wenn aus dem schrecklichen Gewühle
Ein süſs bekannter Ton mich zog,
Den Rest von kindlichem Gefühle
Mit Anklang froher Zeit betrog;
So fluch' ich allem, was die Seele
Mit Lock- und Gaukelwerk umspannt,
Und sie in dieser Trauerhöhle
Mit Blend- und Schmeichelkräften bannt!
Verflucht voraus die hohe Meinung,
Womit der Geist sich selbst umfängt!
Verflucht das Blenden der Erscheinung,
Die sich an unsre Sinne drängt!
Verflucht, was uns in Träumen heuchelt,
Des Ruhms, der Namensdauer Trug!
Verflucht, was als Besitz uns schmeichelt,
Als Weib und Kind, als Knecht und Pflug!
Verflucht sei Mammon, wenn mit Schätzen
Er uns zu kühnen Thaten regt,
Wenn er zu müſsigem Ergetzen
Die Polster uns zurechte legt!

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Fluch sei dem Balsamsaft der Trauben!
Fluch jener höchsten Liebeshuld!
Fluch sei der Hoffnung! Fluch dem Glauben,
*Und Fluch vor allem der Geduld!**

The tempter now changes his tone. Having worked his victim up to the proper pitch of fierce and desperate scorn for all his earthly lot, he proceeds to set before him the boundless joys he may still secure, by listening to advice and accepting assistance from *him*. Faust hears him — but contemptuously: 'How can a wretched fiend,' he asks, 'comprehend or find enjoyment for the lofty mind of man?' 'Yet if it could be so — if I shall ever lie at ease upon this bed of torture; if thy delusions shall ever once cheat me into self-complacency, once betray me with enjoyment; if I shall ever say to any moment, Linger! thou art sweet! — then cast me into fetters, then hurl me down to ruin: I shall not refuse to go. The

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* We are sorry, that to most of our readers, instead of those beautiful verses, we have nothing to shew but the following very dim and distorted image of them:

Tho' from my heart's wild tempest
A sweet remember'd tone recovered me,
And all my youth's remaining hopes responded
With the soft echo of joys long gone by,
Yet do I curse them all — all — all that captivates
The soul with juggling witchery, and with false
And flattering spells into a (this) den of grief
Lures it, and binds it there. Accursed be
All the proud thoughts with which man learns to pamper
His haughty spirit — cursed be those sweet
Entrancing phantoms which delude our senses —
Cursed the dreams which lure us to the search
Of fame and reputation — cursed all
Of which we glory in the vain possession,
Children and wife, and slave and plough — accursed
Be Mammon, when with rich and glittering heaps
He tempts us to bold deeds, or when he smooths
The pillow of inglorious dalliance —
Accursed be the grape's enticing juice —
Cursed be love, and hope, and faith — and cursed,
Above all cursed, be the tame dull spirit
Which bears life's evils patiently.

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great spirit of the earth has spurned me: Nature veils herself from my examination: can the future world be worse than this? Living here, I am a slave: [*S. 326*] What matters whether thine or whose?' Mephistophiles grasps at the offer. The contract is ratified with the usual formalities. He is to be Faust's while *here,* Faust is to be his *hereafter.*

Except the character of Faust himself, that of his new associate is by far the most striking and original in the whole of this wonderful drama. Mephistophiles is not the common devil of poetry, but one much more adapted to his functions. It is evident that he was a devil from the first and can be nothing else. He is emphatically 'the Denyer': he fears nothing, complains of nothing, hopes for nothing. Magnanimity, devotion, affection, all that can sweeten or embellish existence, he looks upon as childish mummery. His powerful intellect enables him to understand all those sentiments and their modes of acting upon men: but the idea of them excites no pleasure in his mind; and he regards all their manifestations as the most weak and ridiculous anility. Pride would be a thing too noble for him; yet his servile conduct proceeds less from natural sycophancy, than from an utter contempt of moral distinctions. He feels it no more disgraceful to cringe and fawn, that he may avoid the trouble of asserting and commanding, than it would be to go round the base of a mountain, that he might avoid the trouble of going over its summit; it is the easiest mode of accomplishing his purpose in both cases, and nothing more. He might be accused of inordinate vanity, but his unfeigned disregard for the approbation of others gives to his self-esteem a character more sinister than that of ordinary vanity. He cares for the suffrage of no one — irony is the only tone in which he speaks of all things; and the universe itself appears in his eyes little better than a huge puppet-show, and its whole history a paltry farce, in which there is nothing to excite any feeling but derision from a rational thinker. He does not even appear to hate any one very deeply. His aim with Faust seems

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rather that of an *amateur,* than of a regular demon: he tempts him chiefly as an intellectual recreation. No doubt, his motives, like all motives, are mixed; but he seems in the course of his operations to display, not so much the rancour and envy natural to his profession as a desire purely scientific — a curiosity to see how ridiculous the empty dreamer, with all his elevations and refinements, his imaginary woes and still more imaginary joys, will look at last. In many respects Mephistophiles resembles some French *philosophe* of the last century. There is the perfection of the intellectual faculties with a total absence of the moral; the extreme of fanciful pleasantry and acute thought, with the extreme of arid selfishness and contemptuous apathy. Upon all those passions and emotions which [*S. 327*] men are ennobled by experiencing, he reasons with the keen sagacity and easy disdain of the most accomplished cynic. The sciences fare still worse with him. Logic, medicine, law, theology, as they pass in review before him, are ridiculed till they seem hardly even worth despising. His wit, and knowledge, and gaiety, and humour, are boundless; but in his hands they do not illuminate — they consume. 'It is written on his front that he never loved a living soul.' He cannot pity, or admire, or worship — he can only mock. His presence is like a moral Harmattan, the 'mortifying wind' of the desert, under which every green thing is parched and dies.

From the moment when Faust connects himself with such a being, his character and conduct become degraded; we pity him not the less, but much of our respect is gone. He seems as if he had thrown away the crown of his manhood, which, though it galled his brow, was still a crown. He has become a slave that he might avoid the duties of a king; and the pleasures of a slave are not suited to his nature. It was himself still more than his circumstances that required change: the wildness of his desires still more than the scantiness of their gratification produced his misery; and the vulgar enjoyments of the world may contaminate him more, but will satisfy

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him even less than the high though infatuated struggles he has now relinquished. Accordingly, he traverses 'the bustling inanity of life: food hovers before his eager lips; but he begs for nourishment in vain.' His heart is alternately wounded by the sneers, and betrayed by the wiles of the scoffing demon who guides him; and he loses his dignity without finding peace.

Faust has given up the pursuit of knowledge in disgust; but he has not yet become a mere man of pleasure. Mephistophiles listens with a smile to his vast project of participating in the pains and joys of all the human race, and filling his soul with human sympathy, since it cannot be filled with the perception of truth, and the sympathy of higher natures. All this, according to Mephistophiles, proceeds from the imperfection of his pupil's understanding. The search of truth is but like 'thrashing straw', it leads to no result; and those ambitious aspirations serve only to make the fool, who entertains them, no better than 'a beast driven about by an evil spirit within a circle of withered heath, while green pastures lie all around it.' To command the services of others, he thinks at least equal to sympathizing with their feelings; and therefore, a wise man should plunge into the rushing crowd of the week-day world; should court power, and the only genuine pleasures — those of sense.

With such views, the two set out together on their travels: [*S. 328*] they are first transported to a scene of boisterous merriment in a Leipsic tavern. The rude jollity of these blackguards appears more amusing as depicted in the graphic poetry of Goethe, than it would if actually exhibited in Auerbach's Keller. It speedily disgusts Faust; and his mentor, after entertaining the topers with an indescribable song, and at last confounding them by some feats of conjuring, conducts him to a witch's cave. The purpose of their visit is to have Faust restored to youth by the spells of this Hecate: and they wait during her absence considering the singular furniture of her establishment.

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There is nothing of the sublime in Goethe's mode of treating sorcery — scarcely any thing of the horrible. A kind of solemn absurdity marks all his witches; they have not the malevolence usually imputed to that class of persons; and they appear to live on a very friendly footing with their master, shewing no wish to quit his service now or afterwards. All that distinguishes them from common mortals is the extreme absurdity and coarseness of their general character, and its adaptation to the peculiarity of their position, mid-way, as it were, between the world of spirits and that of men. The latter circumstance also gives them a tendency to survey life and human nature, in the abstract — to take comprehensive views of things; and this tendency, combined with the dimness of their intellectual vision, furnishes a copious supply of the most ludicrous hallucinations — tinged with a slight shade of preternatural horror, which increases its effect. Perhaps, in the present era, this is the best use that can be made of witchcraft. So far as we know, it is peculiar to Goethe.

The return of youth, which Faust greeted as the highest blessing, becomes the means of sinking him into wretchedness for ever; and deeper wretchedness than ever, because it is now mingled with remorse. In crossing the street he first beholds Margaret; and their earthly fortunes are thenceforth indissolubly connected. Margaret possesses no qualities to call forth our admiration; yet the poet has contrived to make us warmly interested in her favour. She is poor and simple — nothing but a young artless girl in humble life. Yet the meek gracefulness of her nature, her innocence of heart, the strength and purity of her first affection — when contrasted with the dark fate that impends over her — excite our pity keenly; and we regret that a class of interests so touching in their lowly completeness, should have been desolated by the intrusion of the wicked and tumultuous passions of a world, from which she seemed so far withdrawn. Faust her lover, — for he loves her truly, and with a fervour originating not in her qualities but his own character, —

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[*S. 329*] is aware of their relative situation. In the delirium of his feelings, he does not forget that the innocent creature, who views him with such adoration that her whole being is, as it were, swallowed up in his, must participate in the ruin which overhangs him. He utters many a bitter self-reproach, and forms many a strenuous resolution to tear himself away. But the violence of his attachment still retains him; the arts of the fiend — whom he despises and hates, yet listens to — at length prevail; and poor Margaret's ruin is completed.

The succeeding scenes exhibit Margaret in a state of anguish gradually darkening to despair. She has unwittingly destroyed her mother, — a drug intended to be only soporific, having by the treachery of Mephistophiles proved a deadly poison: and Valentine, a brave soldier, her brother, and now her only surviving relative, hearing of his beloved sister's disgrace, and hastening to avenge it, dies by the hand of Faust. Valentine appears before us only for a moment, and then expires: but the qualities he displays in that moment make us regret that we see him no more. He reminds us of Shakspeare's Mercutio. He speaks, with his dying breath, to his sister, in a tone of bitter levity, more cutting than the most indignant declamation. Her own heart but too well seconds his reproaches. Alone and unprotected — her friends all killed by her own hand — her seducer fled to escape from justice — and infamy approaching to cover her, — Margaret has now no stay on earth. Religion itself, which once formed the balm of her life, is now become its bane. In the church, where the choir is chaunting a solemn hymn expressive of the terrors of the last day, an evil spirit is represented as standing behind Margaret, and, applying the most fearful of the denunciations to her; it asks where her mother is? where her brother? and pronounces a woe against her, because their blood is on her hands.

Faust and his companion, meantime, are assisting at a very different scene. They have hastened to the Brocken in the Harz mountains, where the sorcerers' Sabbath, the Walpurgisnight, or night of the first of May, is receiving due celebration from innumer-

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able witches and wizards of every age and rank. It is impossible to convey any idea of this extraordinary convention, or of the plan which Goethe has taken to depict it. We behold the mountain, and the adjacent forests gleaming with a faint, lugubrious light; and witches in full motion towards it from every point — crowding, jostling, treading each other under foot — sailing in troughs, riding on swine, or broomsticks — and capering in all the frantic jollity of their brutish carneval. Goethe appears to have aimed at imitating in his verse the wild [*S. 330*] uproar, which it was his task to describe. It is the *Saturnalia* of poetry as well as of witchcraft. An *intermezzo* is represented before the infernal audience, on the summit of the mountain. Its title is *Oberon's golden marriage:* it treats, like Quevedo's book, *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis.* The interlocutors, who deliver each one verse, are from all quarters of the animal, vegetable, astronomical, theatrical, and metaphysical world, — scene-shifters of Weimar, will-o'-wisps, weathercocks, fairies, the Genius of the age, and snuffings of the stars. It is 'a universal hubbub wild, of stunning sounds and voices all confused'. Feeble glimpses of meaning occur here and there; but the whole wavers between sense and utter nothingness, and leaves an impression like the first dawnings of thoughts in the mind, before they can at all be converted into propositions capable of being contradicted or affirmed.

Faust mingles in this satanic revelry more than we could wish: yet he soon grows tired of it; and we can almost pardon him for having snatched a few moments of enjoyment, or at least forgetfulness, from a source however mean, when we reflect that they are the last allotted to him. The riotous pastime being ended, he discovers that Margaret has been imprisoned for the crimes which she had committed on his account, and is condemned to die. The agonies of remorse take hold of him at the comparison of her recent miseries and hard doom, with the wretched fooleries which have lately occupied him. But the tempest of his feelings moves not

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Mephistophiles. It is vain for Faust to imprecate a thousand curses on the head of this wicked spirit: the demon listens with profound composure; the victim is now within his toils; and the aid he at last proffers serves only to bring on a more torturing catastrophe. Faust is furnished with the keys, and conducted to the door of the prison, where Margaret is confined, while his companion stupifies the jailor, and agrees to wait with his phantom-steeds in readiness to convey them all, ere morning, out of danger. But the efforts of Faust prove fruitless. On exploring his way to the cell where Margaret lies confined, he discovers that hardship has already crazed her brain: she is singing a rude ballad when he enters, and mistakes him for her executioner. Few situations can be conceived more excruciating than Faust's. Before him are the ruins of that young mind whose innocence he has destroyed, whose world, just opening, with enchantments of which experience had not yet proved the vanity, he has changed into a waste howling wilderness; and his last hope of saving her even from an ignominious and painful death is rendered vain. He conjures her to fly, and he will yet love her and watch over her: but his words [*S. 331*] suggest no definite idea to her mind; the power of thought is gone, while that of feeling subsists in more than its original strength; the wrecks of memory are confusedly mingled with abrupt sensations of the present, and hurried anticipations of the future, and over all is heard the wail of blind and degraded woe, more piercing because it is blind and degraded — without claims to respect or hope of remedy. Goethe has pictured the insanity of Margaret with an almost frightful air of reality. There is a tinge of coarseness intermingled with the wild expression of her distracted feelings: it is not the insanity of poetry, but that of life. She recognizes her lover; and her first sentiment is a burst of joy: but her perceptions have no permanency; she replies to his renewed and more earnest supplications for departure, with a 'Whither? — without is the grave' — she alludes to her murdered child, which she calls upon him to make haste and save;

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wishes she were past the hill where her mother sits wagging her old grey head, which is heavy with sleep; tells affectingly, how she herself would be buried to-morrow, — and relapses into dreams which transport her back to the earlier periods of their intimacy. He begs her, if she would not kill him, to come away — 'the day is dawning'; — 'Day!' she exclaims, 'yes, it is day — the last day is dawning; it should have been my wedding-day! Tell no one that you have been with Margaret — Alas! for my garland — it is gone! We shall see each other again; but not at the dance. The mob is rushing, yet I hear them not — the square, the streets, are crowded with them; they hurry me to the block — how they bind and tie me! — the bell is tolling — the judgment-wand is broken, every neck shrinks as the axe severs mine — The world lies dumb as the grave!' Mephistophiles appears at the door to chide their 'useless lingering and prating' — his horses shiver in the morning breeze, he will wait no longer. Margaret shrieks at sight of him; she fervently appeals to the judgment of heaven; and prefers death and the loss of her last earthly friend to being where he has any power. The demon observes that 'she is judged'; a voice, from above, adds, that 'she is saved'. Mephistophiles calls Faust to him and departs; the voice of Margaret is heard from within crying after the latter — but in vain — their earthly history is done, their lots are divided, they meet no more.

The work, of which we have traced this brief and imperfect sketch, is undoubtedly one of the most singular that have ever appeared in Europe. We scarcely know under what class to arrange it, or how to mark out its rank in the scale of literary dignity. As a mere drama, its faults are many; and its beauties, though of a high order, are not of the highest. There is not [*S. 332*] plot sufficient to create dramatic interest; and though many scenes are of great power, and many situations of high tragical effect, they hang too loosely together to constitute a perfect work of this class. Perhaps the most striking peculiarity of the whole performance is the

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wonderful versatility of talent which it implies. To group together the wicked scornful malignity of Mephistophiles with the pastoral innocence of Margaret, the chaotic gaiety of the Brocken, and the impetuous enthusiasm of Faust, was a task which few could have meditated, and none but Goethe could have accomplished. It presupposes a union of poetical and philosophical powers, such as have rarely met together in the history of mind.

It is to the character of Faust, however, as displayed in the opening scenes of the play, that we turn for the highest proof of Goethe's genius. They give us the most vivid picture we have ever seen of a species of mental convulsion, at once in the extreme degree moving and difficult to paint. It is the destruction of a noble spirit by the force of its own thoughts; a suicide of the mind, far more tragical than that of the body. Faust interests us deeply at first; he is at the utmost pitch of misery, and has no feeling of self-accusation; he possesses all the grandest attributes of our nature, and has meant to use them well. His fault seems but the want of worldly wisdom, and the lofty, though unhappy constitution of his mind; he has been born with the head of a sceptic and the heart of a devotee; in grasping at the sublime, he has lost even the useful; when his earthly hopes are all blasted, no moral consolation is in store for him; 'he has not an object, and yet he has not rest.' The sleepless agitation, the arid tearless wretchedness, natural to a human being so situated, have been delineated by Goethe with a beauty and verisimilitude, to which there are few parallels, even in easier subjects. An unlimited supply of the finest metaphors and most expressive language, combines with the melody of the verse to make the earlier part of Faust one of the richest spots in the whole circle of modern poetry.

Faust and Mephistophiles personify the two propensities, as implanted by nature, and modified by education — to admire and to despise, to look at the world on its poetical or on its prosaic side — which by their combination, in different proportions, give

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rise to so many varieties of moral disposition among men. It is not without reluctance, that in the play before us, we behold the inferior principle triumphant in the end. Faust's crimes are many, but his will seems to have had little share in them; even after his connection with the fiend, he feels virtuously, even nobly, though he acts ill; and, when we see Mephistophiles at [*S. 333*] length succeed in ruining a being so greatly his superior in all respects, it seems as if the spirit of evil were made victorious over that of good, the lower part of man's nature over the higher. But if such be our feeling, it is not with the poet that we must quarrel. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die' is the law of nature as well as of revelation; and acts of desperate rashness, though without any purpose morally bad in the author of them, as they produce fatal consequences to the individual or to others, must be punished accordingly. Faust's criminality existed long before he forsook his retirement, or addicted himself to the converse of spirits; it began when he allowed his desires to reach beyond the boundaries wherewith nature had circumscribed them, when he allowed his mind to wander — even in the search of truth — till it doubted the existence of a Providence, and the foundation of moral distinctions. All his subsequent miseries and crimes originated in this — at first view, so pardonable a transgression; and the concluding lines of Marlow may be applied to his conduct and history, with a sense more extended than Marlow meant them to bear —

> Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight;
> And burned is Apollo's laurel bough,
> That some time grew within this learned man;
> Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
> Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
> Only to wonder at forbidden things —
> Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
> To practise more than heavenly power permits.

We cannot take leave of Faust, without adverting to the controversy which has arisen respecting its connection with Manfred. The

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charge of plagiarism, which Goethe brought forward against Byron, some time ago, in a German Journal — and still more his mode of bringing it forward — gave us pain; we thought it unworthy of Goethe; it shews too much of the author, too little of the man. Goethe may be at ease about his laurels. It has been his fortune to live through a change of dynasty in European poetry, and to be himself, more than any other, instrumental in causing that change. He has created a new literary era in his own country; and none will dispute him the glory not only of having furnished many scattered ideas — but what is far more honourable — much important intellectual training, to every one of the great minds, with whose fame all Europe, and particularly England, 'rings from side to side'. The man whose writings served to nourish and direct the genius of Sir Walter Scott, — whose *Götz von Berlichingen* paved the way for the poetizing of Border Chivalry, and thus prepared, afar off, the elements of the Scots Novels, has no need to higgle with Byron about even [*S. 334*] the property of Manfred. It is not our business at present to enter upon the discussion of the point in dispute. A cursory perusal of Faust and Manfred, we think, will satisfy any one, that both works stand related to each other, — that if Faust had never seen the light, neither in all probability would Manfred. Yet it does not appear to be as parent, but as forerunner, that Faust is related to Manfred. The idea of man's connection with the invisible world is the same in both; but in Byron it is treated solemnly; in Goethe it often furnishes matter of laughter. Manfred, too, is not the same character with Faust; he is more potent and tragical, less impetuous and passionate, and the feeling of remorse is added to that of the uncertainty of human knowledge. In the management of the plot, the two peaces have no similarity, and the impressions they leave on the reader are as different as possible. Byron is not a copyist, but a generous imitator, who rivals what he imitates. We have not heard that Goethe has given in any claim to a right of property in Don Juan. Perhaps he might, with some

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prospect of success; but the advantage of succeeding would be small. Mephistophiles is, unfortunately, not a character very difficult to conceive; nor has our countryman presented it under a form likely ever to become very pleasing, or permanently useful. The German devil is a much shrewder fellow than the biographer of Don Juan; he sneers as keenly and as comprehensively; he despises with fully more sprightliness and tact; and the taste for physical impurity in all its most disgusting shapes, which his English rival manifests so strongly, is one of the few qualities which the great 'Denyer' seems to have acted wisely in denying.

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